

Guide to the Hartford Fair Rent Commission

The Fair Rent Commission is a Commission in the City of Hartford that has the power to decide whether a proposed rent increase is harsh and unconscionable.

What does the Fair Rent Commission do?

1. Provides information

The office at City of Hartford's Department of Development Services, Housing Division provides information to landlords and tenants regarding their individual rights and responsibilities. The staff responds to the complaints by phone and scheduled appointments. Due to Covid-19 concerns, walk-ins are not preferred at this time.

2. Resolves Complaints

The Fair Rent Commission office receives complaints from tenants about increased rent charges to their apartments that may seem harsh. The Commission's staff works with other city departments such as the Licenses and Inspections Division to investigate any housing code complaints to promote safe housing.

If the staff cannot mediate problems between the landlord and tenant, the Commission will hold a public hearing. After the hearing, the Commission may order the landlord to reduce the proposed increased rent. If the apartment needs repairs, the Commission may order the rent to be reduced or maintained at the current level until the landlord has made all needed repairs. The Commission may also order that rent increases be phased in gradually.

Who may file a complaint with the Fair Rent Commission?

Only tenants may file a complaint with the Commission. Any tenant who resides in Hartford may file a complaint. A written lease is not required for a tenant to file a complaint. The tenant does not need a lawyer to file a complaint.

Under what conditions could you file a complaint?

- The landlord has demanded an increase that the tenant believes is harsh and unconscionable
- The landlord wants to charge the tenant for utilities/services when they used to be included in the rent or are shared by all tenants

How does the Commission make its decision?

The law lists **13 factors** to be considered:

- The rent is charged for similar apartments in the City or neighborhood
- The health and safety conditions of the apartment
- The number of bathtubs, or showers, toilets, and sinks in the apartment
- Services (such as utilities, furniture, furnishings and equipment) supplied by the landlord
- The size/ number of bedrooms in the apartment
- The repairs needed to make the apartment livable
- The amount of taxes and other expenses of the landlord
- Whether the apartment complies with the Hartford Housing Municipal Code and State Statutes relating to health and safety
- The tenant's income and whether there are other apartments the tenant can afford
- The utilities in the unit, and whether the tenant or the landlord pays for them
- Damages, other than ordinary wear and tear, which the tenant has caused to the apartment
- How much the landlord has raised the rent in the past
- How much of the rent increase will be used to improve the apartment and building

What happens after the hearing?

1. The Commission can decide that the rent increase is *fair* and order the tenant to pay it.
2. The Commission can decide that the rent increase is *unfair* and:
 - Set the rent at a fair level and order the landlord to accept that amount
 - Or**
 - Decide that the rent increase must be phased-in gradually
 - Or**
 - Delay a rent increase until repairs are made.

The Fair Rent Commission office is located at:
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